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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000390

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/PD FOR ANNE SESHADRI, EAP/RSP FOR KAREN  
MCCARTHY, DRL/PHD FOR VANESSA GOLDING  
BANGKOK FOR USAID  
STATE PASS USAID FOR CHRISTINE WEGMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/31/2015

TAGS: [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: PUBLIC DIPLOMACY TRAINING PROMOTES INTER-ETHNIC  
COOPERATION

REF: A. 04 RANGOON 1456

[B](#). RANGOON 224

[C](#). RANGOON 345

[1](#)1. (U) This cable includes an Action Request. Please see paragraph 11.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary. As the "Global English" Program completes its fifth month, enthusiasm for the course remains high among the 23 enrolled participants representing nine ethnic democratic political parties. Despite some obstacles to attending the program, most participants have requested an extension of their enrollment beyond the program's current nine-month schedule. They have affirmed that the program contributes to inter-ethnic understanding and (they hope) long-term cooperation. To date, the program has covered globalization and economic development, including such topics as social indicators, and the role of international organizations. Post seeks Department assistance to resolve outstanding ESF funding issues for the program. End Summary.

[1](#)3. (C) A series of individual feedback sessions between Global English participants and public diplomacy officer revealed that enthusiasm for the course, initiated in October 2003 (REFTEL A) and now completing its fifth month, remains high. In fact, most of the 23 program participants, drawn from nine ethnic democratic parties, have requested the program be extended beyond its current nine-month term, saying that the coursework is contributing to the attainment of their long-term goals in politics, education (particularly in regards to English language study), and their own careers, and that additional in-depth study of subjects in the curriculum would be helpful.

[1](#)4. (C) The participants made this request despite the fact that a number of them have outside commitments that at times limit their ability to attend class: some participants based in the provinces must return upcountry periodically for political consultations and/or to deal with family issues; others run their own businesses; and one is in the midst of formal university studies.

[1](#)5. (C) More ominously, program attendance has been affected by recent SPDC moves against the democratic opposition, particularly Shan-affiliated political groups (REFTEL B). For example, two UNA-affiliated program participants were detained briefly for questioning by Burmese authorities in relation to the recent arrest of SNLD Chairmen of Khun Htun Oo and other Shan politicians. A third class member left Rangoon, fearing negative consequences from his association with one of the arrested Shan politicians, and still another SNLD-affiliated member may depart Rangoon shortly in order to help reorganize the party in Shan State. Separately, a class member from a Rohingya minority-affiliated party has also been detained for questioning by authorities and will likely face imprisonment (REFTEL C). The detentions are apparently unrelated to participation in the Global English program, and in fact, to date, those detained and released resumed their attendance immediately.

[1](#)6. (C) To date, the program has covered globalization and economic development, including such topics as social indicators, and the role of international organizations. Embassy Economics Officer also discussed foreign direct investment and U.S. economic sanctions with the group. (Other Embassy Officers will lecture on additional topics in future classes.) However, the program has been unable to begin on its schedule of inviting expert speakers to visit because the ESF funding promised for the project has not arrived at post.

[1](#)7. (C) Though most of the program participants did not know each other prior to joining the program, all agree that their participation in Global English has helped increase inter-ethnic understanding. Course members have discovered commonalties in the struggles of their fellow ethnic groups, and they hope this mutual understanding will engender long-term inter-ethnic cooperation.

[1](#)8. (C) Participants have learned more about Burma's place in

the world, particularly in terms of its development status and economic situation. Though most class members were aware of Burma's underdeveloped status, many were shocked and dismayed to learn of just how low Burma's status has sunk in relation to other countries in the world (as measured, for example, by the UN's Human Development Index) and the military regime's role in "attaining" that status.

9. (C) The program's influence on individual's attitudes can sometimes be described as profound. For example, one class member commented that learning about globalization and Burma's place in the world made him realize that he could no longer only consider the interests of his own ethnic group; he now comprehended the larger connections between his group and other parts of Burma and the rest of the world. Another student mentioned how prior to joining the course, she believed armed struggle was an acceptable and effective means to achieve political goals for her ethnic group, but that she has since revised her thinking after learning about the non-violent methods of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (whom class participants studied in conjunction with Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Black History Month).

10. (C) The Global English Program is also having a positive multiplier effect within the various ethnic communities: to the extent possible, program participants disseminate information learned in the Global English program through their respective informal ethnic networks. While the extent of these networks is limited, and the current oppressive political climate further discourages political discussion, the Global English program has helped inspire its participants to seek out these channels to promote political awareness among their fellow ethnics, particularly among the youth.

11. (U) Action Request: While actual program implementation has been quite successful, post still awaits final resolution on ESF funding issues for the program. The project leader is owed remuneration and has been working without pay since 15 March. Post appreciates all assistance from EAP and AID to expedite the direct apportionment of the ESF funding for this program.  
Martinez